PRESS RELEASE

TUCSON MAN SENTENCED TO 16 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR BABY FOOD JAR HOAX

TUCSON, Ariz. – Michael P. McLaughlin, 49, of Tucson, was sentenced here today by U.S. District Judge Raner C. Collins to 16 months in prison plus restitution to Bashas' Supermarket in the amount of $15,000.

McLaughlin had been charged with violating Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1365(c), Tampering with Consumer Product, in that he knowingly communicated false information when he claimed that he had tainted a consumer product by placing rat poison in baby food jars in a specific supermarket in Tucson, Ariz. McLaughlin pleaded guilty on March 22, 2005.

On August 4, 2004, the Tucson Police Department received information from the San Diego Police Department concerning a telephone call that McLaughlin had made to his sister in La Jolla, Calif. In the telephone call to his sister, McLaughlin informed her that five days beforehand he had poisoned baby food jars with rat poison at a Bashas' Supermarket on Tucson. He was specific in his statement claiming that he removed rat poison from a shelf in the store and put it in five applesauce jars. The sister then contacted the San Diego Police Department. When San Diego Police Officers located and questioned McLaughlin, he admitted that he had told his sister that he had poisoned the baby food, but that he had made it up to get attention so she would visit him. It was determined that the threat was a hoax. Bashas', nevertheless, pulled all of the baby food jars from all of their store shelves in Tucson as a safety precaution.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the FBI, the Tucson Police Department and the San Diego Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Raquel Arellano, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

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